Your Address

Dear xxxxxxx

**Protect pupils with allergies**

I am writing to ask that you provide your support for the above national campaign, launched by Benedict Blythe Foundation in memory of five year old Benedict who collapsed at school and died from anaphylaxis.

In 2024, a freedom information request sent to 20,000 English schools found that **70% of schools did not have the recommended allergy safeguards in place**, ½ did not have access to spare lifesaving medication (adrenaline pens) and 1 in 3 didn’t even have a basic allergy policy.

**A 2023 petition launched by Benedict Blythe Foundation reached in excess of 10,000 signatures** in two weeks, with over thirteen thousand people backing the call for legislation and funding to move these safeguards from voluntary to mandatory.

As a constituent, this campaign is important to me because: INSERT YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE HERE

Please see some details here: [Introduce new requirements to protect students with allergies in school - Petitions (parliament.uk)](https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/633614) and supporting research and evidence here: [www.benedictblythe.com/protect-pupils-with-allergies](http://www.benedictblythe.com/protect-pupils-with-allergies). A recent Guardian long read about the campaign here <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jul/15/its-one-of-the-great-mysteries-of-our-time-why-extreme-food-allergies-are-on-the-rise-and-what-we-can-do-about-them> brings the issue to life.

In 2016 and 2017, three food-allergy related deaths occurred in schools: a 9-year-old boy died from anaphylaxis due to an undetermined allergen, a 14-year-old and 13-year-old boy, both with dairy allergies, died after suffering allergic reactions to school dinner and physical contact with a piece of cheese, respectively. Inquests identified key contributions included a lack of adequate staff training resulting in delayed and incorrect administration of adrenaline, along with policy implementation issues relating to AAIs being out of date and not readily available. **In 2021, Benedict Blythe collapsed at school and died from anaphylaxis aged 5-years old.**

Food allergy affects around 7.0–8.0% of children worldwide or about two children in an average-sized classroom of 25 children (Santos et al., 2022). Children spend at least 20% of their waking hours in school. Thus, not surprisingly, data show that 18% of food allergy reactions and 25% of first-time anaphylactic reactions occur at school (Higgs et al., 2021). Moreover, anaphylaxis due to food allergy occurs in schools more than in any other setting (Muraro et al., 2014). Food-related anaphylaxis has increased considerably over the past 20 years, particularly in younger children (0 to 4 years).

At the moment schools and teachers are expected to follow up to ten guidance and policy drivers, coming from Department for Education, Department for Health and Social Care, and Food Standards Agency (FSA). The statutory guidance, *Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school*, makes no explicit mention of allergy or the safeguards schools should be putting in place. Not only is it unclear what the expectations are on schools, their ability to deliver on them isn’t checked until things go wrong. While the guidance remains open to interpretation**, parents are faced with a ‘post code lottery’** where they often have to make choices between the schools that feel safest or the ones that best meet their child’s educational needs.

**England lags behind other western countries, with Sabrina’s Law in Canada having been in place for almost two decades.**

Benedict’s family have engaged with Department for Education, brought [Westminster Hall debates](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-11-30/debates/A9F298AA-3310-40A6-99E6-AC26867AC1F0/SchoolPupilsWithAllergies), [Prime Ministers Questions](https://www.shaileshvara.com/parliament/vara-calls-safer-schools-children-allergies#:~:text=Speaking%20at%20Prime%20Minister%E2%80%99s%20Questions%2C%20Shailesh%20Vara%20called,with%20the%20Health%20Secretary%20to%20discuss%20this%20further.), parliamentary questions and [adjournment debates](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2024-05-21/debates/2A3C1AF4-E315-42CD-8E8C-08CF1B2570BD/AllergyGuidanceForSchools), and are now outlining an ask for legislation to be implemented to better protect pupils with allergies. In May 2024, an [Open Letter](https://www.benedictblythe.com/open-letter/) co-signed by over 40 charities, clinical groups and representatives from industry was presented to Secretary of State for Education calling for legislation and funding to be put in place.

This legislation would make it mandatory for all schools:

1) To have an allergy policy, including an anaphylaxis plan

2) For pupils with food allergies, an IHP and anaphylaxis action plan completed (and regularly updated) collaboratively by the child, parents/carers and school staff

3) To hold spare AAIs that are in-date

4) To implement training for school staff and teachers on allergies and anaphylaxis and a whole school allergy awareness approach

5) To record instances of allergic reaction and ‘near misses’ taking place in school

* Government funding for the additional cost to schools for AAIs and training
* Adherence to these measures to be checked as part of schools’ assessments by Ofsted

You may know of children in your life or your constituency who have allergies and are at risk of anaphylaxis. Legislation will ensure all schools adopt the pillars of good practice, meaning children have greater protection and reduced risk while they’re at school. If you would like to hear lived experience stories from families, teachers and pupils you can read about them in [Allergy Stories.](https://www.benedictblythe.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/AllergyStories_56pp_sign-off.pdf)

The campaign is supported by organisations including the BSACI (British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology), Natasha Allergy Research Foundation, Allergy UK, Anaphylaxis UK, Airborne Allergy Action, Independent Schools Association. It is also supported by clinicians and experts in paediatric allergy including Prof Adam Fox and Dr Paul Turner, by educators and teachers, and by parents.

**We would like for you to confirm your support for this campaign, and ideally agree to meet with Benedict Blythe Foundation to understand how you to lend your support.**

If you have any questions, please contact Benedict’s family at helen@benedictblythe.com or visit [www.benedictblythe.com/protect-pupils-with-allergies](http://www.benedictblythe.com/protect-pupils-with-allergies) where you can follow the campaign. You can also download the [Action Paper](https://www.benedictblythe.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Action-for-Allergies-in-Schools.pdf) which includes an overview of the campaign asks.

Yours sincerely

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